



# FACT SHEET

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Headquarters 388th Fighter Wing (ACC)

Office of Public Affairs

Hill AFB, UT 84056-5017

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squadron received P-61 “Black Widows”, the first fighter designed for night fighting, in June 1944.

## 421st Fighter Squadron

The 421st Fighter Squadron is one of three fighter squadrons assigned to the 388th Fighter Wing at Hill Air Force Base, Utah. The unit operates night-capable advanced targeting pod-equipped F-16CMs.

### Mission

As part of the world’s largest Block 40 Common Configuration Improvement Program (CCIP) F-16CM wing, the 421st Fighter Squadron conducts flying operations to maintain combat readiness of a 24-aircraft F-16CM squadron.

It prepares to deploy worldwide to conduct Day/Night air superiority, precision strike, and Forward Air Controller (Airborne) sorties employing laser-guided and inertially aided munitions during contingencies and combat.

### Personnel and Resources

Approximately 50 personnel are assigned to the 421st Fighter squadron. Equipment includes 24 CCIP modified F-16CM aircraft worth over \$600 million.

### Organization

The 421st Fighter Squadron, an Air Combat Command unit subordinate to the 388th Fighter Wing, Hill Air Force Base, Utah, flies the Lockheed Martin F-16.

### History

The squadron was activated May 1, 1943, as the 421st Night Fighter Squadron, in Orlando, Florida. Following 6 months of flight training, the squadron arrived at Milne Bay, New Guinea, and assumed duty with the 5th Fighter Command, 5th Air Force, in the Southwest Pacific.

For the next 14 months, the squadron and its detachments moved several times throughout New Guinea providing cover for U.S. Army assault landings and shipping reconnaissance.

Flying patrols, the 421st engaged in bombing and strafing while protecting the various new air bases. By the end of November 1944, squadron pilots scored victories flying the Lockheed P-38 Lightning, Douglas P-70 Havoc, and Northrop P-61 Black Widow. The



In October 1944, squadron personnel moved to the Philippines, and after bitter fighting, established a camp at San Marcelino in February 1945. During the next 6 months, the squadron’s activity was intense aerial combat—bombing missions became an everyday occurrence.

Following the Japanese surrender, the squadron became part of the occupation forces at Itazuke Air Base, Japan. On February 20, 1947, the squadron was inactivated, with 16 victories to its credit.

Fifteen years later, on July 8, 1962, the 421st Tactical Fighter Squadron was activated and named a tactical fighter squadron with the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing, George Air Force Base, California. The squadron flew the Republic F-105 Thunderchief.

While deployed to Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, from April to August 1965, flight crews rotated to a sister squadron in Southeast Asia enabling squadron members to gain combat experience.

From April 1966 to April 1967 the 421st TFS was stationed at Korat Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand, with the 388th TFW. For the next two years, the squadron was stationed with three different stateside wings—in name only.

On April 23, 1969, the 421st TFS transferred to Kunsan Air Base, Korea, furnishing McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II’s for defense alert. On June 21, 1969, the squadron was transferred to Da Nang Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, and remained there through October 1972, flying 15,420 combat missions.

On October 31, 1972, the unit moved to Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, with the 432nd Reconnaissance Wing.

Combat missions continued in Vietnam until the cease-fire on January 28, 1973, in Laos until February 1973, and in Cambodia until August 15, 1973. The squadron then changed to a training environment and participated in countless tactical air exercises. During April 1975, squadron pilots participated in the evacuation of Phnom Penh, Cambodia and Saigon, Republic of Vietnam. In May 1975, the squadron flew in tactical missions associated with the recovery of the USS Mayaguez and its crew.

For its tremendous efforts in Southeast Asia, the 421st TFS earned three Presidential Unit Citations, six Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with "V" devices, the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Palm, and flies 12 campaign streamers for Southeast Asian duty.

In December 1975, the 388th TFW transferred from Thailand to Hill Air Force Base, and by June 30, 1977, the 421st TFS unit was combat ready.

On December 29, 1978, the squadron was reduced to zero aircraft, yet remained with the 388th until June 1980 when they received their first F-16. The 421st was the second squadron to achieve combat ready status in the F-16.

After attaining combat readiness in the F-16, the 421st TFS was tasked to provide formal training for pilots transitioning to the F-16. In November 1981, the squadron deployed to Egypt where it trained Egyptian pilots in exercise Bright Star. From July 1, 1982, until January 1, 1983, the 421st TFS had trained pilots from Britain, Egypt, and Pakistan, as well as U.S. pilots. Squadron deployment locations in the 1980's included Egypt, Oman, Norway, Italy, Ecuador, Denmark, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait.

The 421st FS completed conversion to the new F-16CG Block 40 aircraft in February 1990, the second

squadron to do so. On August 30, 1990, the squadron deployed to the Persian Gulf in support of Operations **DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM**. On March 20, 1991, the 421st FS redeployed to its home at Hill Air Force Base after distinguishing itself by flying 1,300 combat sorties (1,200 at night) without any losses or battle damage. Since then, the 421st FS has deployed around the world in support of various operations, including Operations **SOUTHERN WATCH, NORTHERN WATCH, and NOBLE EAGLE**.

In August of 2002, the 421st FS transferred all its maintenance personnel to the 388th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron as part of the wing reorganization.

The 421st FS deployed with the 421st Aircraft Maintenance Unit (AMU) to Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, to support Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM from May to September 2003.

The 421<sup>st</sup> FS and AMU became the first-ever active duty F-16 squadron to deploy to Balad Air Base, Iraq supporting Operation IRAQI FREEDOM from August 2004 to January 2005. The squadron flew over 1,300 sorties. The squadron then returned to Balad Air Base from May to September 2006 flying 1,400 sorties and 6,400 hours. The squadron deployed to Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, July 2009-January 2010, flying over 1,800 sorties in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

Now **flying** fully modified CCIP F-16CMs, equipped with night vision goggles, **Harm Targeting System**, and the Advanced Targeting Pod, the 421st FS continues its proud combat heritage as a premier night fighter squadron.

## 421st Fighter Squadron highlights

- Received the P-61 "Black Widow", the first fighter designed for night fighting, June 1944
- Recorded the first aerial F-105 kill in Vietnam, June 29, 1966
- Recorded the longest non-stop F-16 flight in history for 16 hours with 10 aerial refuelings (5 at night) while deploying to Operations Desert Shield, August 1990
- First unit to use the GBU-24 Paveway III from an F-16 during Combat Hammer at the Utah Test and Training Range, July 1995
- The unit made history when it was part of four operational squadrons the 388<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing deployed to Southwest Asia in one year, 1996
- Deployed to Southwest Asia, as part of AEF 1, to support Operation Southern Watch- September 1999
- Deployed to Incirlik, Turkey, as part of AEF2, to support Operation Southern Watch, December 2000 – January 2001
- First 388 FW aircraft to fly homeland defense following Sep. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks
- Deployed to Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, to support Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, May – September 2003
- Deployed to Balad Air Base, Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, August 2004 – January 2005. First-ever active duty F-16 squadron deployed to Balad Air Base. Deployed to Balad Air Base, Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, May – September 2006.

(Current as of January 2014)